

Myth Criticism

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Origins

- ▶ Myth critics were a group during the first half of the twentieth century
- ▶ They used theories from sociology, anthropology and philosophy that were oriented towards the studies of folklore and myths
- ▶ A lot came from Nietzsche's ideas from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872):
 - Basically that without myth, humanity lacked connection, origin and roots because myths were the base to the critical and cultural elements that shaped our civilizations
- ▶ T.S. Eliot and James Joyce applied this to *The Wasteland* and *Ulysses* respectively

Cambridge Anthropologists

► Frazer:

- Magic, ritual and myth helped early civilizations to conceive and connect with the spiritual and unexplainable
- As the ritual died in practice, the myth was mistaken for law

► Chase:

- The impersonal was directed into myths that fulfilled the emotional needs of individuals

► Cassirer:

- Myth was a way of apprehending and envisioning the world

► Malinowski:

- A functional view of myth; they served a purpose to explain mechanisms within societies.

Carl Gustav Jung

- ▶ For Jung, myth was a message from the unconscious (psychoanalytically, a part of our minds that we are not fully in contact with).
 - The collective unconscious was a sort of psychic connection that all human beings shared and through which their experiences were interconnected, which would have explained why there are so many similar myths among different cultures
 - Shadow: the negative characteristics of a person, the dark side of ourselves which we are not aware of, but which we manifest when we are not at our best
 - Anima and persona: the anima is our opposite gender traits (female traits in males, male traits in females) and the persona is the personality we display to others)

Archetypes

- ▶ Images or tropes that recurrently appear in myths and literatures around the world
 - The good mother
 - The evil temptress
 - The trickster
 - The sacrificial scapegoat
 - The resurrected hero (Jesus-like people)
 - The Hero (and their journey/quest)
- ▶ Jung believed them to be universal, but are they really?